Brookline
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Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit.

Ezekiel 18-31

From time to time we hear people saying that the world is not such an one as should have been brought into existence by infinite wisdom, power and love. No doubt there are others who would shrink from making definite assertion that this is the case, but who wonder if they may not be, in the end, driven to make it, and are therefore inwardly troubled because the world does not bear more plainly the marks of a divine origin.

What kind of world, then, is it that we have been given to inhabit? The question at once divides into two branches; for there is that wider Nature, which belongs to animals as well as men, and there is a narrower sphere which we speak of as our own human world. With reference to the life of nature as a whole, we ought to beware of undertaking

to judge too closely of its character, ignorant as we are of many things which should have weight in making up the verdict. So far as we know anything of the celestial mechanism ~~[illegible]~~ which governs the heavenly bodies, and regulates the action of such forces as gravitation, electricity, and light, we can only pronounce ~~this~~ it absolutely perfect. We are dumb, with wonder and awe, before the inconceivable perfection of ~~this~~ its working.

In the realm of living things, exclusive of our own life, there is a great deal that offends us. The ways of nature, in the animal kingdom, ~~are~~ are not our ways, and nobody can explain away the hard features of bloodshed and ferocity that have such prominent place in nature's economy. But we have no means of gauging the amount of suffering which this involves, nor do we know what part this suffering may play in the gradual upbuilding of that living consciousness which has at last taken on the form of man. Obviously, death and destruction are necessary parts of this process of development. Without them there could have been no unfolding of the successive orders of life.

that which was in part had to be done away, before that which was more complete could come.

This world has served to support and carry forward an ascending tide of life, which has yielded humanity as its highest and most triumphant result. If one must needs criticise the means by which this has been brought to pass, it would seem to devolve on him to explain how this result could have been attained by a shorter, and easier, ~~or~~ and a better path. This, plainly, he is unable to do.

He may think that if he had commanded the work he would have proceeded on a different plan. But he never did make a world, and he knows almost nothing of the proper way to go about such a task. Presumably the powers which have done this work are quite as wise and kind as he, and he really has not the slightest warrant for assuming that they have been deficient in skill, or wanting in moral purpose.

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With regard to what we know more distinctly as our human world, however, the world of men and of their interests and relations, that, in the general estimation of mankind, at least is decidedly bad; ~~is pretty bad~~; and the most inveterate optimist can hardly disguise from himself that it is a great deal worse than he could wish it to be. For many centuries it was held to be a moral ruin. Humanity ~~Mankind~~ was said to be sick unto death of its many sins. It was supposed to be so sunk in ~~[illegible]~~ degradation that there was no health left in it. From that estimate, it is true, there has been a strong reaction. Probably no one whose opinion is worth considering, now believes it to be as bad as that. Indeed there has been some attempt to maintain that nothing whatever ~~was~~ is the matter with it. We have heard it said that evil ~~was~~ is only good

in the making: that every fall ~~is~~ is really a fall upward; and that however great the appearance of injustice and iniquity ~~will~~ may be, let the system of things go on for a time, and all this ~~would~~ will prove no more than the inevitable incidents of the process, by which a good world ~~is~~ is growing steadily better, year by year, ~~Now, however~~ at the present time, however, all that complacent belief that, everything ~~being~~ considered, things are in the best possible state, just as they are, is being swiftly put to flight, by a ~~propaganda of~~ growing social unrest; which has filled ~~most~~ many people with a great deal of alarm and dismay about the condition of society at large. We hear no more about the total depravity of human nature, ~~and~~ or the curse of the Almighty resting upon a debased and rebellious world. But we hear a great deal about a reigning social order, which is said to be absolutely fiendish in its character; and we have painted for us, over and over, an actual state of our working world, that cannot well be more gloomy, if Augustine himself should draw the

pictured, in terms of orthodox theology. It is said to be so bad that it could not possibly be worse; and many are now bent upon its destruction without much care what may come afterward; because, with the present system of living out of the way, they think, we should be at least as well off as we are now, and might easily establish something better in its place.

Most of us, undoubtedly, would feel this to be a gross exaggeration. And yet we can but allow that, all consistency aside, our human world is so very far from an ideal state that we could wish it to be, somehow, all made over, into another likeness, before we were ready to pronounce it really good. The extent to which it is filled with bitter antagonisms renders it rather ~~worse~~ worse, morally, than a kingdom of beasts; for if they prey upon each other it is, at least, without hate or animosity. The degree in which dark passions and hideous weaknesses have obtained control of it, and the vast difficulty of curbing the widespread vice which thus results, makes us feel, sometimes, as if no sufficient power of our own were left in our hands. Above all, perhaps, the terrific waste of human energy, due to misdirected effort, and the wanton destruction of

both public and private war, reduce our race almost to the estate of pauperdom. (~~There can be, one would say, no doubt about it~~). In a world capable of sustaining all its human children in peace and plenty, humanity at large stands always upon the very verge of starvation, because, of all that men do, only some small fraction really counts toward bettering the average ~~physical~~ condition. ~~As we waste nine tenths of our coal to make the other tenth turn the wheels of our railroads and our factories, so a large part of the effort of our race is expended in ways that may bring profit or pleasure to a few, but fail to raise the condition of the great mass of mankind.~~

This is all, as we have said, rather bad. But now where does the badness lie, and who is responsible for it? It is the favorite notion of our time that the badness lies in the very system whereby we live; in that mechanism of things which is supposed to give each man his daily task, and determine what he shall have for doing it. If that be true, then the powers that watch over ~~us~~ us would be ~~[illegible]~~ discharged of some measure of responsibility.

The laws of this world are not altogether of our framing. In part we frame for ourselves the structure and framework of our society, but alas in part that is forced upon us, by causes which we could never turn aside. If it be the system of things that is so bad, then that is shaped, in large measure, by forces back of the good or bad intent of human hearts, and upon them, as well as upon us, the shame and the reproach must fall.

But I do not myself believe, for one moment, that the system is at fault. What kind of world is it that God and man, working together throughout the past, have given us for our inheritance? A world, some say, where each one is compelled, in the nature of the case, to be his brother's despoiler, and enslaver, and enemy; a world where each man's hand perforce is set against his neighbor, and he can only earn his daily bread by stifling and betraying his sense of human brotherhood.

Not so, I answer. Not in the least is that a true account of the world of which we make a part. No more fatal misconception of the fundamental facts of our existence could be imagined; no error

based upon the main character of our social and individual life could be altered, instead of a want which thus forwards and necessitates amity and strife, ~~it is~~ we have one which, whatever may be in the hearts of men, and however they may hate each other, compels them, if they work at all, to work for each other's benefit.

They may wish only to injure and destroy; they may be armed with rage against their neighbors here at home, or the alien in some foreign ~~[illegible]~~ land; but if they ~~[illegible]~~ work enough to earn an honest living, they cannot possibly prevent their hated fellow from deriving some ~~benefit~~ advantage from this work. The deepest law of our life is not enforced enmity, but enforced coöperation. And so far as the world has risen at all above the mere savage level, it has risen through the operation of this law; and spite of all that men could do, to the contrary, they have ~~helped each other in conquering a higher~~ been compelled to help each other in the conquest of a higher and a better heritage.

He who ~~makes~~ weaves a yard of cloth, here, is meeting the need of some one on the other side of the earth.

though that other be one whom he utterly despises, ~~[illegible]~~ and calls by ~~the~~ opprobrious ~~[illegible]~~ names of ~~"nigger~~". He who gathers a pound of tea, in the distant orient, does it for my refreshment and comfort, though I am, in his sight, nothing but a "foreign devil". Never could any commerce whatever have arisen if this were not the dominant fact of the situation. Never could industry ~~so much as~~ have lifted its head out of the dust, if the capitalist and the labourer had not found the relation subsisting between them one that was for their mutual advantage.

The system wrong? The system, so far as it has been shaped by the greater forces of being is right enough. It is poor, ignorant, ~~[illegible]~~ misguided, brutal man who is persuaded that he can do better than follow and obey the system; that he can best advance his fortunes, not by honest exchange of services with all his fellows, but by catching his neighbor in some helpless state, and extorting from him a larger share of the ~~[illegible]~~ good things that lie in his possession.

What shall we say, then, of a world so full of men who do their best to transform themselves into beasts of prey, and which, were the law, forces them, in large degree, even

while they are breathing out threatening and slaughter, to act as servants and helpers of those whom they despise and hate! What shall we say of a world which contains a vast deal more actual partnership and brotherhood, in all the relations of life, than the common man, anywhere, recognizes or feels? a world where, across the deepest chasms of race-antagonism and private enmity, men are made to minister to each others needs and to share a common good? Is not that such a world as we might fitly ascribe to the God and Father of us all, whom we believe to be perfect in wisdom and in love?

As for the greed and lust and hate in the human heart, which so ill accord with this fundamental law of our social life, man himself must be held responsible for that. There is nothing in the world about us, ~~that~~ (excluding what we catch, or imitate, from other human beings), that instils into us these unlovely qualities. Such sins are not to be blamed upon the Universe. They distinctly have their origin in the heart of man; and when he thinks it worth while to do so, he can put

put them down. ~~And even the "way of the world," so often made a scapegoat for individual shortcomings, forces anybody ~~to anything~~ to be, in spirit, anything other than the friend and helper of his kind. It is true enough that if one elects to play a certain game with others, he must play it according to the rules which they choose, or he is looked upon with much disfavor. But, you see, nobody compels him to play that game. That is his own deliberate choice.~~

And so while, all about us, we hear ~~the~~ prominent demands that the system of living shall be ~~so~~ amended, ~~so~~ in order to provide, more effectively, ~~for~~ the forms of human brotherhood, I ~~should~~ would suggest that it is worth while, first of all, to live up to the forms of brotherhood we have; to fill existing channels with the spirit of peace and coöperation, before we go about to provide new conduits for a volume of life which now runs but a trickling stream, though ~~[illegible]~~ in channels that we have, ~~[illegible]~~.

The Hebrew prophet in old time, laid the emphasis exactly where it belongs: "I'll give you a new heart and a new spirit." The main difficulty

which we have to face conditions — not a problem in social mechanics, but a problem in human nature,

No one wishes to maintain that external conditions are ~~ey~~ negligible things. But laws help to make a bad world; and good laws, when they can be enforced, make for virtue righteousness and peace. But what one has to complain of, about the temper of the age in which we live, is that, to such surprising extent, people regard the political arena as the only field in which they are to ~~fight~~ work out their salvation.

Our human world has an inner soul, as well as an outward shell; and while it is true that this inward life can be, ~~to~~ in some degree, reached and modified through the change of outward conditions, it is at least no less true that external forms must, in the end, take on what shapes the nature of the spirit prescribes for them. This latter side of the relation between spirit and form our age has half forgotten. It is notorious that common belief in spirit has sunk to low ebb. Perhaps this was inevitable in a time so much given to mechanical invention as our own. Such great wonders have been achieved, by way of adding to the

tools and appliances of life, that men persuade themselves of their ability to invent a system of living which will be free from the defects under which society has thus far suffered.

Thus we see that ~~the prevailing type of~~ what calls itself socialism ~~chiefly~~ for the most part shouts and screams the idea that humanity needs to grow up to the ideal programme which ~~they hope~~ it undertakes to present, ~~[illegible]~~ The better world is said to be a sum of ~~problems~~ questions of economics, with which the quality of human nature has nothing whatever to do; ~~and~~ when one suggests that we must somehow get better men and women, before we can get a much better society, ~~they seem only able to conceive of him~~ he is said to be no ~~better~~ more than a craven ~~[illegible]~~ apologist for existing wrongs,

~~Yet the proof that their faith, in a form of the world which consists only in alteration of its laws and customs, is fallacious, stares us in the face on every side. What is more plain as a lesson of some recent shocking events than that, as a railroad man has said: ~~the~~ safety, on ~~railroads~~ railways, is above all a question not of appliances and trainings, but of personal~~

~~character. You may have anything that nothing can give; but in the hands of a reckless man this furnishes no safeguard whatever. In military circles, at least, it is well understood that, in a final test for supremacy, it all depends upon the "man behind the gun." That is a very simple, and a [illegible] trite consideration; yet it seems to me there is nothing which our modern world more needs to have called to its attention.~~

The neglect of religion which is one of the marked features of our life of the present day, and which among socialists has become active hostility, arises from practical disbelief in that inner world of hope and faith, of aspiration and desire, which is the special care of the church. It is not thought to matter much what spirit animates the common mind. If it be a bad spirit, stop its effects by law; if it be a good spirit still it is probably impotent till it is armed with legal sanctions.

Against all this our spirit of confidence in the efficacy of external power and influence it is the mission of religion to insist, with tireless patience, on the supreme significance of an inner world of thought and

desire, "Get you a new heart and a new spirit," the prophet of the soul is always saying. Your wealth is valueless, and may prove nothing but a curse, unless your heart be attuned to life's better purposes. So long as the ~~[illegible]~~ spirit of ~~a~~ tiger rules the inward life of humanity, it is vain to dream of outward peace. ~~You may need to defend yourself against the ferocity and greed which surround you; yet~~ ~~[illegible]~~ ~~beware! lest, in making that defence, your own soul fall a victim to the demons of bitterness and hate.~~

~~Warfare is a dangerous expedient, however just the cause; for when the passion of controversy is once aroused, reason and justice soon cease to be much heard.~~

Our current literature may be taken in evidence that it is not difficult to plan out something like an ideal society. Utopias can be and have been imagined, by the dozen, and very good ones too, if any one had the will actually to set them going. The ~~[illegible]~~ hard thing is to get the spirit that belongs to such ideal states of human life. Repeatedly experiments in this direction have been made, and it has been found that men and women, ~~[illegible]~~ even quite above the ~~[illegible]~~ average in moral standing and intelligence

could not get on with spirit so much of the kingdom of heaven. ~~Now it has to~~ no doubt, it must be granted that the church hitherto, has not made the attainment of this better spirit, in this present world, so much the aim of its conscious endeavour as it ought to have done. It is slow and laborious work, at the best, building up the spiritual natures of men; far too slow to suit the impatience of most human desire. And therefore, no doubt, feeling more or less discouraged about its heavenly kingdom on earth, the church has too much postponed, to another world altogether, the realization of man's better hope.

Yet even so, by its emphasis on that world of spirit and the need of preparation for it, the church has kept alive belief in the spiritual nature, as the real source of all our good. If it has not done so much as it might, to help men toward a new spirit, it has continued to say to them, you must somehow get a new heart and a new spirit,

And now there is everywhere, among those who are interested in the future of religious institutions, ~~that this~~ an awakening sense that this is not only the true function of the church, but the

main business of human life. You must be born again, said the great Founder of this church to a certain Jewish Ruler who had come to see what he was like. There is another kind of being within you, not at all a creature of flesh and blood; who must struggle through all the phases of infancy, and grow to strength and maturity, before you can enter into the kingdom of God. Surely that higher and better man exists, ~~potentially~~, in all of us. We all lead more or less a double life. It is not that we are hypocrites; for we cannot rid ourselves of thoughts and feelings and desires that come to us through our animal ancestry.

But within that is another nature, so different from all that is born of flesh, that it frequently finds its entanglement with that lower order of being unspeakably loathsome and abhorrent. ~~Who has not sometimes, if not often, revolted at the thought that he must live as animals, as other animals do?~~ Between the spirit of man, and of nature round about him, there is, said Huxley, "everlasting war." To him this was terrible,

because he did not think that the human spirit would ever really triumph. To Christ and Christianity, it is on the other hand, the basis for a boundless hope; ~~the~~ because they believe in ~~the triumph~~ the eventual victory of that spiritual power; and through his victory they look, not only for peace on earth, but for unending blessedness beyond.

The whole history, and tragedy, and achievement of our race is written in that struggle between spirit and sense. The one thing that really counts, as a gain in human life, is the slow emergence, to power and command, of that higher ~~[illegible]~~ type ~~[illegible]~~ of humanity, whose image we recognize in the [illegible] life of Christ.

It does not much matter whether or not his maxims can be made to work in the pursuit of worldly riches, nor whether any of us have worldly riches. It matters everything whether or not ~~[illegible]~~ our humanity is to find at last ~~[illegible] to find~~ the secret of that peace and ~~[illegible]~~ beauty which fills the wondrous [illegible] of things, if [illegible] we can get enough of his spirit into our hearts, it may be taken for granted that the lower world of sense and physical labor will also become a quite different place.

For this the Church of Christ exists: to promote the development of ~~a~~ that higher spiritual nature: of this "new man in Christ Jesus" who lives not for himself but for the good of all. If this man were already here, with power, do you think there is any system of laws and usages that could hold him back from the attainment of his purposes, one single day? And until we have this spiritual man, there can no more be a spiritual Commonwealth than one could found a Society of civil engineers among Hottentots.

But the Church believes in spiritual humanity as the coming King of humanity; believes in that sort of "Superman" ~~that~~ whom the life of Christ represents to us; and in his creation here as the supreme next ~~great~~ step of the evolutionary process. And it believes this, not alone because human ~~of~~ beings are bound to struggle toward ~~this~~ it, as the fulfilment of their destiny; but because it believes in an infinite spirit which has been, and still is, working for itself a progressive incarnation in earthly forms. It sees not only things, which evolve, but perceives that they must evolve out of

something, and toward something, there is not only the right impulse of our hearts, but back of that an eternal power that makes for righteousness. Life has climbed so high, there must be still a greater height to reach; and there must be an urge, out of the great *depths of being*, to help it make that climb.

The Church is set to remind men of that God, whose will and purpose it is to achieve the fulfilment of every promise and potency of the human soul; that, through faith in His might to aid them, they may continue and increase the struggle for self-attainment, and self-expression, through which alone the higher reach and range of personality can be won.

Enough of the Spirit has come into our hearts so that we cannot *leave off* striving for more; without feeling ourselves so worthless that we are overwhelmed with a sense of futility and shame.

But on the other hand, it is a far*, far* journey, where we long to go. There are many storms to be faced; and there is much fighting with wild beasts to be encountered by the way.
~~From very ancient times it has been the~~

~~function of the prophet, the man of God, to help sustain human hearts in the paths of the Spirit; and the minister of the Gospel of Christ, who is privileged to bear tidings of the rule of Infinite love, is to call upon himself, and all men, never to be weary in seeking for themselves that spirit which is "peace on earth, and good will toward men,~~

We have urgent need of all the help and support we can gather, from each other's society and example, in trying for that new heart and new spirit which is set before us as our goal, and of every word of cheer, incitement and encouragement that may be spoken to us from prophetic lips,